



INSITES

INTERIOR SPACES
IN CONTEMPORARY ART

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum of American Art
at Champion

INSITES INTERIOR SPACES IN CONTEMPORARY ART

MAY 26–AUGUST 23, 2000

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum of American Art
at Champion

The Whitney Museum of American Art at Champion is funded by Champion International Corporation.

This brochure accompanies the exhibition "Insites: Interior Spaces in Contemporary Art," organized by the 1999–2000 Helena Rubinstein Curatorial Fellows of the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program: Xiaoming Albert, Erin Barnett, and Helen Burnham.

The Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program is supported in part by Joanne Leonhardt Cassullo, the New Dorothea L. Leonhardt Fund of the Communities Foundation of Texas, Easton Foundation, and the National Committee of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Endowment support is provided by The Dorothea L. Leonhardt Foundation, Inc., and the Helena Rubinstein Foundation.

© 2000 Whitney Museum of American Art
945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street
New York, NY 10021
www.whitney.org

INTRODUCTION	5
SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW: THE DOMESTIC INTERIOR AS A SITE OF RESISTANCE	6
ERIN BARNETT	
UNCANNY INSITES	12
HELEN BURNHAM	
COLLAPSED INTERIORS	18
XIAOMING ALBERT	
WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION	22
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	24



Jessica Wynne. *Untitled*, 1994

INTRODUCTION

“Insites: Interior Spaces in Contemporary Art” focuses on the domestic interior in U.S. art of the last thirty-five years. Since the nineteenth century, American artists have been dealing with interior spaces in various ways. One approach began in the 1960s in response to the homogenizing influence of modernist architecture, mass-produced consumer items for the home, bland suburban housing projects such as Levittown, New York, and the proliferation of housekeeping magazines and television shows about a standardized breed of middle-class family. A strong critique of the influence such developments exerted on everyday life became increasingly pronounced among artists concerned with questions of identity formation—that is, with questions of how one attains personal and political values. Starting from the premise that a sense of self and society is intricately related to a person’s surroundings, the work of these artists brings attention to the interior as a site of individual and social development or, alternately, of withdrawal and stagnation.

The art works featured in “Insites” critique the sitcom world of the 1950s and 1960s that still exists as a model of American domestic felicity. By opposing the conformity of person and interior space to the *Leave It to Beaver* standard, they assert the importance of diversity in the domestic realm and in the larger social sphere. Despite this general agreement, artists over the past four decades have explored a variety of approaches to the subject. Three are discussed here by the exhibition’s curators. Erin Barnett writes about works that challenge the once-assumed political neutrality of the domestic sphere and the beliefs this space nurtures. These works are part of a wider cultural attack on homogeneity—both within and beyond the home. Helen Burnham also draws attention to frustrated expectations that the interior offers a safe shelter from disturbances in the outside world. Her essay, however, focuses on art that highlights psychologically charged aspects of the home, art whose represented spaces elicit an uneasy feeling that is as unhomely as a domestic environment can be. In a similar vein, Xiaoming Albert investigates domestic surroundings as a metaphor for psychological space. Many of the works in the exhibition, she argues, force viewers to reconsider their relationship to the interior and acknowledge that the quotidian spaces shaping daily life are dynamic and ever changing.

By concentrating on three strands of contemporary art’s engagement with the interior, “Insites” allows visitors to consider their own connection to these spaces. How do residents of Martha Stewart’s home state of Connecticut think about their surroundings? What is assumed and desired in their domestic environments? What effect do inhabitants have over these spaces and what impact do they exert? In light of cultural studies that target the interior as a site of identity formation, it is interesting, perhaps essential, to ponder the visual world with which we are most intimate: the domestic space of everyday life.

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW: THE DOMESTIC INTERIOR AS A SITE OF RESISTANCE

ERIN BARNETT

For many, “home” is a sanctuary, a place to relax after work. This mythology creates and/or reinforces a separation between the private and public spheres. But it also produces hierarchies. For example, society devalues the status of the person (usually female) whose role is to keep the home in order. “Home,” then, is not only a shelter but a place where values, assumptions, and identities are created and maintained. What kinds of meanings are constructed in this space? How are they created and monitored? What do they say about the inhabitants of the domestic sphere and the site itself?

Ideology and hegemony are concepts that help explain how ideas and attitudes about the interior are formed. According to political philosopher Antonio Gramsci, ideologies are the collective thoughts through which meanings are produced and expressed. Hegemony is the process through which dominant definitions of reality come to be accepted as common sense. Ideology and hegemony are not visible forces. Instead, their traces can be seen in such diverse realms as popular culture, language, and visual culture. In a similar manner, the inhabitants of domestic spaces are often not visible in the works of art in “Insites,” though their presence is often palpable. Palatial porch windows, plastic food on kitchen tables, reproductions of art on walls, and rooms arranged in a style more evocative of the pages of interior design journals than any vernacular setting render the domestic environment of the contemporary middle class as a surface of signs.

Many of the works featured in “Insites” challenge the neutrality of the domestic interior. They explore how meanings are produced within these spaces by following the model of “disarticulation and rearticulation” addressed by contemporary cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall.¹ This model involves disconnecting representations from the events of everyday life that they describe, a process that revises our understanding of these events. Many of the artists in the exhibition employ this process to create new images of interior space with new meanings. This practice, moreover, is part of a larger investigation of how reality is represented. For example, by exploring the perceived dichotomies between personal and political, private and public space, and interior and exterior, the works go beyond the limits imposed by dominant social and artistic conventions in an attempt to question how accepted meanings about interior spaces are created. The works also question how the innovative use of media, such as documentary photography, can alter understandings of the domestic sphere. The increasing commodification of society and the home is another theme addressed by a variety of artists in the past thirty-five years. By critiquing conventional, and by now accepted, ideas about these spaces and their inhabitants, many of the works address issues of class, gender, and the increased commercialization of society.

Works by Martha Rosler and Abelardo Morell invite the viewer into the private realm of the home—the kitchen and the living room. These photographic works question the perceived boundaries between interior and exterior. Rosler's 1969–72 photomontage series *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful*, for example, shatters notions of spatial, political, and photographic limits by seamlessly juxtaposing images of the Vietnam War found in *Life* magazine with representations of ideal interiors from the pages of *House Beautiful*. Photomontages such as *Red Stripe Kitchen* and *First Lady (Pat Nixon)* challenge the boundaries between the public sphere of war (commonly understood as masculine) and the private domestic sphere (commonly understood as feminine), and also blur the distinctions between the personal and the political. Breaking with habitual perception, home in Rosler's photomontages is not a shelter from the horrors of the outside world. The world, rather, is rearticulated as a bellicose space, a process that implicates the viewer in the passive assimilation of ideology as processed through media imagery.



Abelardo Morell. *Camera Obscura Image of Houses Across the Street in Our Living Room*, 1991

In Abelardo Morell's camera obscura photographs, domestic interiors are literally transformed into places that include both public and private spaces. In *Camera Obscura Image of Houses Across the Street in Our Living Room*, Morell first transformed the living room into a giant camera obscura by sealing off all light sources (windows and doors) with sheets of dark plastic. He then cut a tiny hole in the plastic that acts as the camera's aperture. After an image of the neighbors' houses appears upside down on the wall (this is the effect of the optics of a camera obscura), Morell then photographed this seemingly incongruous scene that merges interior with exterior. In a sense, the camera obscura acts as a surveillance device, providing images of the outside world without the aid of a human eye.

Morell's work questions the boundaries of the house as an impenetrable site and the limits of photography as a truth-telling medium. Although the surroundings (e.g., well-kept houses and manicured lawns) look comfortable and innocuous, this rearticulation of suburbia has a new psychological dimension. Informed by a way of thinking about vision itself as a form of surveillance, the photograph disturbs our ordinary order of vision by including images of both the interior (the living room) and the exterior (the neighborhood). This vision is structured to enforce normative behavior and homogeneity. The view-

er, located in the living room, is able to monitor the exterior world without even looking out the window.

The photographs of Tina Barney, Jessica Wynne, and Dan Graham draw on the history of photography as a documentary medium to question boundaries of class. Unlike many documentary photographers, Barney turns the camera eye not on the less fortunate but on her own life of privilege, allowing us to peer into a world of beautiful people, luxurious Manhattan apartments, and exclusive Newport vacation houses. Like voyeurs looking through a window, we enter beautifully decorated interiors, such as the one rendered in exquisite detail in *The Portrait*. Here the people seem overpowered by the baroque floral pattern of the wallpaper, bed linens, dresser, and curtains, an effect that emphasizes the role interior decoration plays in the formation of identities. At first glance, these idyllic spaces



Tina Barney. *The Portrait*, 1984

suggest a perfect, harmonious family life. However, the physical distance between the family on the bed and the maid seems to suggest a psychic tension. Indeed, these photographs do not celebrate the class status of those they portray, but critique the adoption of a type of interior decoration that separates the rich inhabitants from the materially underprivileged domestic help.

Jessica Wynne's photographs also play with the history of documentary photography. Her works, unlike those of Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange, do not attempt to evoke pity, nor do they necessarily give the subject a sense of dignity. In *Untitled* (1994), we only see a small reflection of the inhabi-

tant, a middle-aged man, in the mirror that dominates half the composition. A lamp with a rosary hanging from the shade divides the image at the center and helps establish a contrast with the pictures of nude women ripped from pornographic magazines. With its classically balanced composition and cool palette, Wynne's work calls attention to the way photographic images influence our judgments about people and their surroundings.

Dan Graham's snapshot photographs investigate the way space becomes a signifier of class in the United States. His *Homes for America* series (1969) documents working- and lower-middle-class home interiors and suburban neighborhoods. The photographs, combined with the essay Graham wrote to supplement the series, employ images of nearly identical tract housing units to address the myth of individuality. These coolly detached pictures simultaneously reveal and critique the commodification of the private home and the domestic sphere.

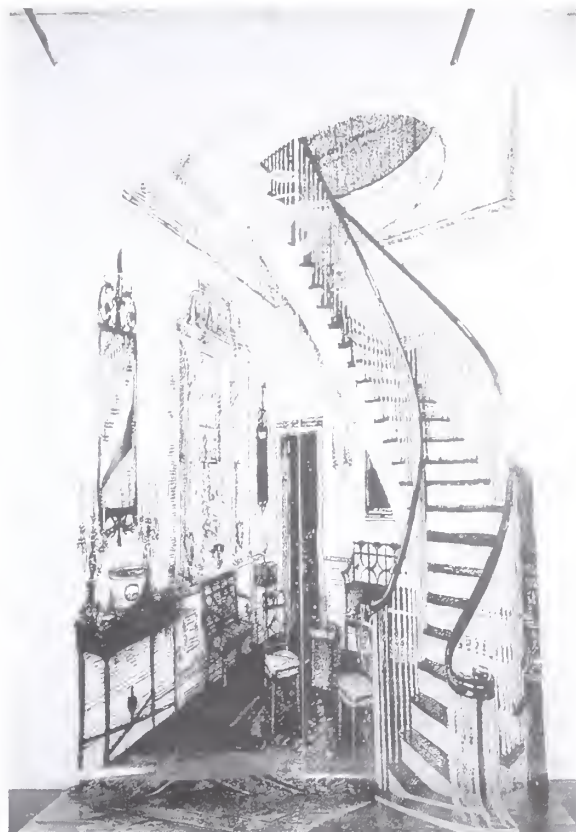
The political, social, and psychological effects of commodification on the inhabitants of such homes are taken up in the work of Laurie Simmons, Louise Lawler, and Cadence Giersbach. Simmons' photographs address the constructed nature of the domestic role of the woman in the suburban, middle-class interior. The bathrooms and kitchens in these

works comprise images taken from interior design and women's magazines, thus highlighting the role of the media in shaping our concepts of the home environment. They focus on the underappreciated labor of the housewife (an unsmiling plastic doll in the photographs), who is conventionally required to maintain unrealistic standards of cleanliness throughout the household and to create exquisite meals in the kitchen. Critiquing photography's role in the creation of these "ideals," Simmons' work emphasizes the homogeneity of the commodified interior as well as the misery of the woman trapped within its walls who is doomed to repeat these mundane tasks forever.

Interior spaces can also highlight the commercial nature of art objects, as illustrated in Louise Lawler's series of paperweights. Lawler affixes photographs of art in collectors' homes—a Roy Lichtenstein print in the kitchen and a Matthew Barney installation in the bathroom—to the bottom of clear paperweights to reveal the way in which art is employed to signify the collector's wealth, taste, and class. The paperweights themselves also function as art objects that are collected and displayed in homes. But as commercial products, they reveal the problematic nature of the relationship between art and commodity culture.

Cadence Giersbach's works, made from manipulated photographs of well-appointed European and North American living rooms and drawing rooms, also address the commodification of interior spaces. *Staircase*, an image of a spiral staircase and hallway of a home painted with small dabs of black pigment on an almost invisible roll of Mylar, looks extremely realistic from a distance. The work seems to invite us into the private space of this gracious home, but just as quickly shuts us out. As we become aware of the dots of paint and the spaces between them that create this illusionistic image, the representation falls apart, becoming blurry and strange. *Staircase* at once appeals to our desire to live in a world decorated by Martha Stewart or the editors of *Architectural Digest* while at the same time commenting on the dizzying effects of a society obsessed with commodities and inundated by media images of the "perfect home."

Both Gordon Matta-Clark and Francesca Woodman are interested in the boundaries between interior and exterior, the former literally deconstructing architectural space, the latter working within it. An architect by training, Matta-Clark developed a practice he termed "anarchitecture," a combination of anarchy and architecture. In *Conical Intersect*, he



Cadence Giersbach. *Staircase*, 1999



Francesca Woodman. *Then at one point I did not need to translate the notes; they went directly to my hands*, Providence, 1976

sliced through two seventeenth-century houses in Paris, eradicating fixed notions of interior and exterior space by exposing the residue of life in these places to the outside world. The cuts fracture the architectural space as well as the flow of historical narrative provided by the building itself. Documentation of these dramatic, aggressive gestures exists as photographs, drawings, and videotapes. Matta-Clark manipulated the photographic representation of these cut-up buildings by means of collage, thereby restoring a sense of space to the altered building. The panoramic and enclosing space of the work, made by collaging three

photographs of different views of the interior together where light floods through the cuts, places the viewer in the center of the destruction. By disrupting the space, Matta-Clark's work also attempts to upset the boundaries between interior and exterior, between architecture and art. The work invites us to speculate about a range of issues, including the histories of the families who lived in these spaces, the economic realities of housing, and the psychological effects of leaving or losing one's home.

Francesca Woodman's black-and-white photograph *Then at one point I did not need to translate the notes; they went directly to my hands*, *Providence* explores the interruption of space by the human body rather than by brute physical force. In images of decaying buildings, the body and space surrealistically merge into one object. Peeking out from behind the peeling wallpaper, the female body seems trapped, yet unsure whether to dissolve or to escape. Where, this image asks, does the body end and space begin? The interior and the wallpaper overwhelm the woman, much as in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. In this 1892 story, a woman is locked up in a room by her husband to cure her of "hysteria." Although defiant and sane at the beginning of her confinement, she becomes obsessed with the wallpaper in her prison and thoughts of it consume her waking moments. Is the woman in the photograph subsumed by society's idea of woman or space (symbolized by the wallpaper), or is she artfully adapting, like a chameleon, to changing conditions?

The works discussed here hold up the domestic sphere for public scrutiny and question the boundaries between two ostensibly separate realms. They challenge the very notion of the ideal middle-class home and expose the role the media and visual images play in reinforcing ideas about interior space. And they do so in traditional forms of representation to deflate received ideas about domestic space. In this respect, the works are prescriptive. They not only encourage us to think about the role of our surroundings in the formation of identity, and the signifying systems used to create these environments, but they prepare the ground for a more democratic rearticulation of space by contributing new representations to visual culture.

1. Stuart Hall, "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies," in Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curran, and Janet Woollacott, eds., *Culture, Society, and the Media* (London and New York: Methuen & Co., 1982), pp. 56–90.

UNCANNY INSITES

HELEN BURNHAM

“All work and no play make Jack a dull boy.”
—Proverb

“Uncanny” describes a curious feeling elicited by Stanley Kubrick’s 1980 film *The Shining*. In one of the work’s more unsettling scenes, a female character discovers that her husband has typed the banal proverb quoted above across hundreds of pages. The proverb’s repetition signals the madness of the husband—the film’s protagonist—and the creepiness of the Overlook Hotel in which he hallucinates (seeing doubles of himself and of former residents) and loses himself in labyrinthine corridors with walls that breathe and bleed. In Kubrick’s production, the once innocuous proverb becomes one of the most horrifying passages in twentieth-century film.

The term “uncanny” has been used since the beginning of the nineteenth century to designate, according to Sigmund Freud, “that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar.”¹ The word describes a phenomenon in which everyday scenes take on disturbing overtones. It recalls the experience, for example, of encountering a stranger who appears to exactly resemble a close friend, or of seeing—in a foreign town—a house that duplicates the one in which you grew up. On an even more disturbing level, the “uncanny” refers to ordinary objects which become animate and threatening, such as the walls in *The Shining*. These disconcerting occurrences suggest that commonly held perceptions of reality may be mistaken, and that dismissed notions such as doppelgängers, déjà vu, and extrasensory perception are in fact credible. What makes these situations “uncanny” is not that they are outrageously bizarre, but rather that they maintain a semblance of normality, even as they encourage belief in strange effects and superstitions. Just as the age-old saying “All work and no play...” signals the protagonist’s insanity, his familiar greeting “Honey, I’m ho-o-ome” follows his attempt to hack down his apartment’s front door and attack his family with an ax.

A little-discussed current of recent art practice also focuses on ordinary facets of everyday life to reveal their psychic potential and extraordinariness. This trend is evident in contemporary architecture, where it has been theorized as the “architectural uncanny.”² The buildings that fit within this rubric evoke the disquiet and unease of *The Shining*’s hotel through the use of techniques such as the fragmenting of space via glass barriers and two-way mirrors. As the space breaks up and the walls become transparent or ethereal barriers, expectations of solidity, privacy, and shelter are disrupted. Much of the art featured in “Insites” functions in a similar manner. It too focuses on quotidian places and their objects, while disturbing the stability of spatial constructions that are usually taken for granted. As in much cultural production of the postmodern era, these works comment on the psycho-

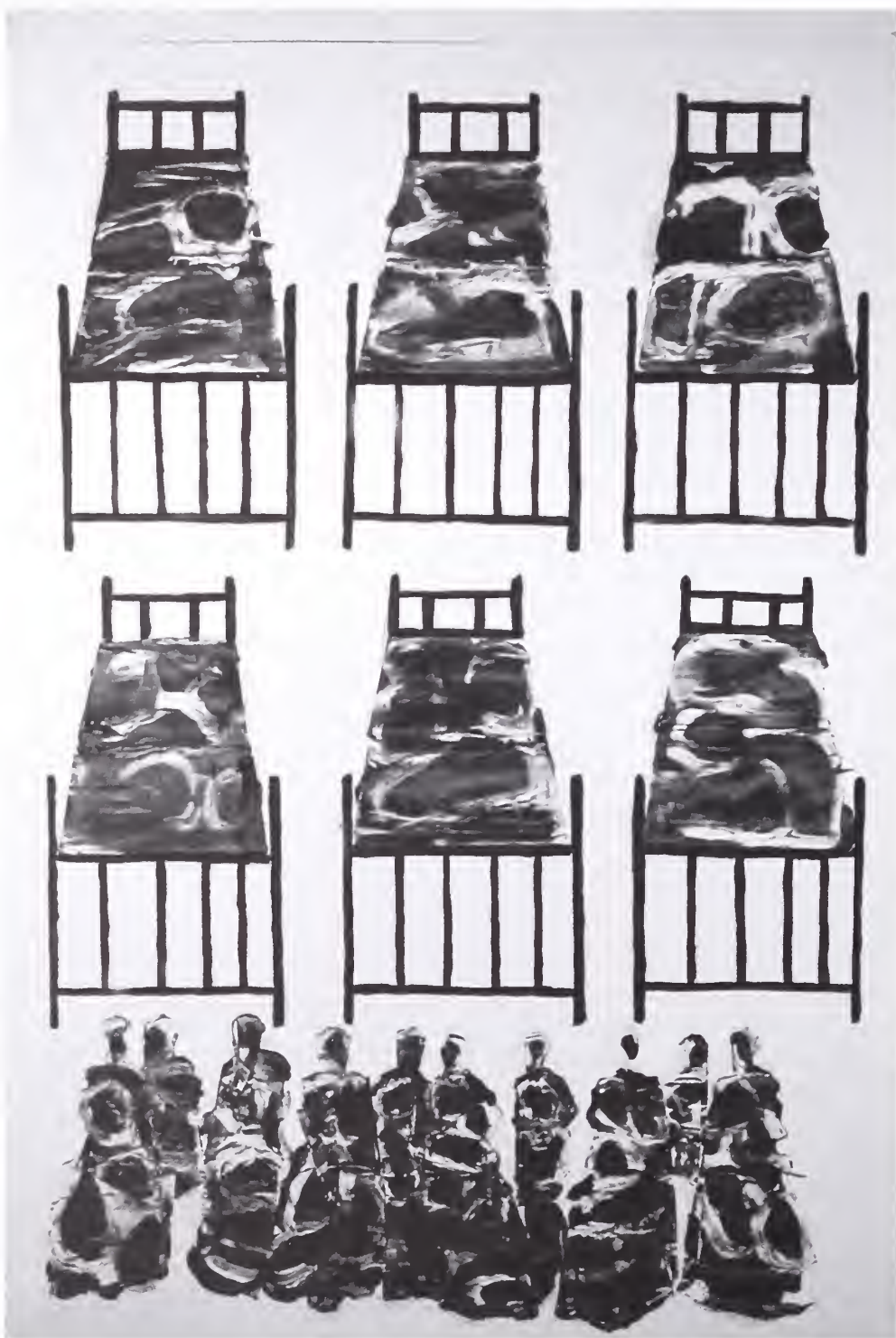
logical underpinnings of what is largely excluded by modernism and humanism—the pathological and the residual. These objects highlight the uneasy underside of modern life and reveal the “uncanny” present in the everyday.

A mirror, for example, is among the more ubiquitous household items, and the action of looking at oneself in one is an ordinary part of everyday life. Peter Scott’s *Untitled* (1998) appears at first glance to be a simple full-length mirror. Upon closer examination, however, a ghostly image appears in tandem with the reflection. It is a stylized portrayal of a woman being strangled, taken from a “true crime” magazine.³ Scott creates this effect by positioning a painting and a picture lamp behind a one-way mirror. This allows the viewer—as in police line-up scenarios—to see behind the mirror only when it is backlit. In recent years, homes and communities have erected gates, barricades, and other divisions to protect residents from the outer world’s violence. By inserting a fearsome scene into a quintessential artifact of domesticity, Scott reconnects the domestic realm with the terrors that its inhabitants believe exist only beyond their walls. He points out that, ironically, it is within the interior that images of death and doom in society circulate via magazines as well as through action figures, comic books, television, and video games. It thus becomes obvious that domestic surroundings are not impermeable to the outside world, and that supposed barriers reveal our problems as much as they attempt to shelter us from external dilemmas.

Greg Drasler’s *Aviary* is also at once familiar and ominous. The canvas is so large and so realistically painted that it may initially fool viewers into believing that an actual three-dimensional space filled with hothouse plants and old-fashioned bird cages in a brightly lit room lies beyond its frame. Yet the illusion of these surroundings is quickly compromised by such disconcerting details as the branches, which may be part of the wall mural or grow from cachepots below, and the curious absence of a bird despite all the available perches. Rather than a bird,



Greg Drasler. *Aviary*, 1994



Leemour Pelli. *Untitled*, 1998

Drasler has inserted a small picture of a private jet. The plane signals the dreamlike quality of *Aviary*. The work's other odd qualities are undergirded by this second reference to flight, which is everywhere suggested but nowhere present.

The domestic interior is a particularly appropriate site for investigations of the “uncanny”—or, as the word is literally translated from German *unheimlich*, the “unhomely.” Uta Barth's *Ground #42*, which includes reproductions of Vermeer's *Lacemaker* and *Milkmaid* in the upper left corner, speaks of a continuity of artistic interest in domestic interiors. But instead of portraying a quiet moment of introspection in well-kept surroundings, Barth has elided the expected subject. To create this photograph, she focused her camera on a spot where someone might stand—in front of the two pictures, bureau, and green wall that constitute the image. These quotidian elements could make *Ground #42* seem like an ordinary snapshot of a shoddy room if the objects were in focus. The lack of clear outlines, however, assaults the viewers' belief in a represented reality, leaving the gaze unguided and determinations of meaning elusive. Are the bureau and pictures elements of an abstract composition? Or do they suggest a narrative about the imaginary person on whom Barth focused her camera? What does a central lacuna, formally and literally, imply about the (in)significance of that person? On the other hand, what is so important about these objects that they warrant our attention?

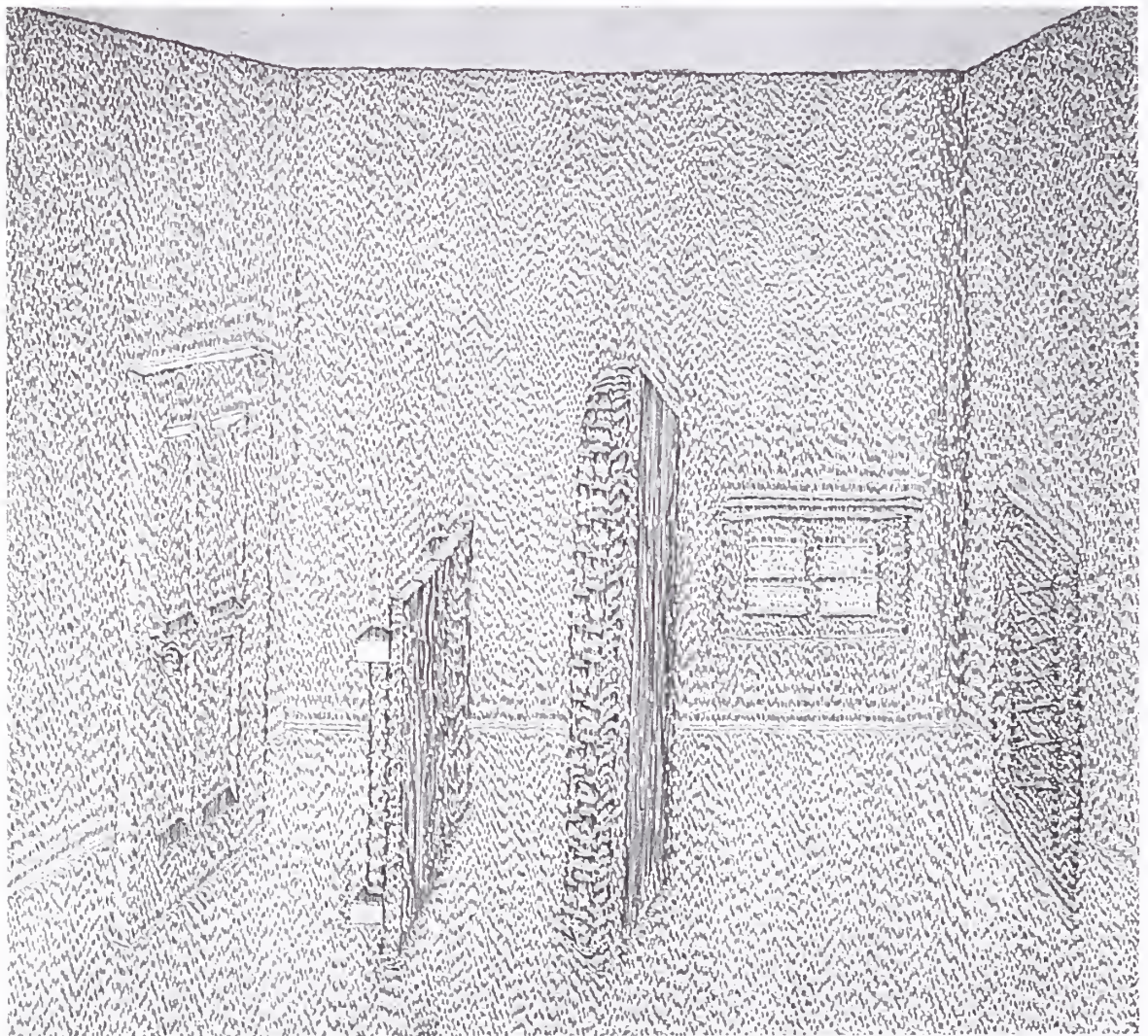
Domestic furnishings can take on forbidding psychological overtones. Catherine Murphy's *Moiré Chair* is a case in point. As a painstakingly wrought, nearly *trompe-l'oeil* painting of a pink armchair, it seduces the viewer into believing that it is a straightforward representation of reality. But Murphy, in the manner of the German writer E.T.A. Hoffmann and other nineteenth-century writers on whom Freud comments, “deceives us by promising to give us the sober truth, and then after all overstepping it.”⁴ The stark angle, the close perspective, and the shadow make the chair loom threateningly. It thus takes on, or rather embodies, fearsome qualities.

A disturbing ambiguity between the animate and inanimate also characterizes the beds and dresses of Leemour Pelli's 1998 oil on paper *Untitled*. Against a white background, single beds are repeated in two lines above faceless figures, who wear large hooped dresses. The texture and color of the work—smeared with curves of oil whose brown and red shades suggest blood and flesh as well as the decorative patterns of designer fabric—imply a material connection between the figures, dresses, and beds. The imposition of the beds above and the dresses over the figures, moreover, creates a hierarchical effect in which the trappings (or rather entrapments) of everyday life seem more important than the people who stand below and within them. Pelli's work comments on the depersonalization of contemporary society in which the attributes of consumer goods such as furniture and clothing determine identity—to the point of taking on the psychological relevance of flesh and blood.

Although Richard Artschwager's depictions of interior spaces and the seemingly utilitarian things which fill them are not frightening per se, the assault they launch on visual expectation is disturbing. *Door, Mirror, Table, Basket, Rug, Window D*, for example, illogically fits

the named objects into a nonfunctional room. While reiterating the tactility of our surroundings through variation of surface design, the work frustrates any desire to enter, touch, or use these furnishings.

Repetition of household objects in a series of works also serves to increase the “uncanny” potential of the depicted items. This is especially true in the art of Robert Gober, which is filled with renderings of sinks. In his 1985 drawing *Untitled*, as in Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* of 1917—a urinal exhibited as an art work—the sink erotically evokes human orifices as well as the repression of conventionally perverse, or unclean, desires. Unlike Duchamp’s ready-mades, however, Gober’s sinks are made by hand. They are therefore more closely connected with the body and, ironically, with the traditional craftsmanship largely absent in



Richard Artschwager. *Door, Mirror, Table, Basket, Rug, Window D*, 1975

mass production—not only of bathroom sinks but of most interior furnishings and decoration. Gober's work draws attention to the objects in the human environment which can trigger sexual imagery, while simultaneously critiquing the homogenization of interior space and the desire it encapsulates.

Similarly, Ryan McGinness' two works, both entitled *Interior View*, reiterate the formulaic design of a common household fixture. The paintings feature elongated views of sectional sofas. Like Gober, McGinness has commented upon the work of an artistic predecessor. In a manner similar to Andy Warhol's Campbell's soup cans, for example, the sectional sofas are standard images culled from widely available sources. McGinness takes the sofa's format from public domain clip art, which is now as common a source as the mass-media imagery of Warhol's day. McGinness then warps the sofas, stretching them horizontally (thirty percent beyond normal) to create a disturbing moment as the viewer is prompted to question received familiarity. Does (mis)recognition of the sofas rest on the physical ubiquity of such items in our homes or on the fact that they have been seen in countless similar representations? The likelihood of both possibilities explains the unsettling effect of McGinness' slight alteration of the sofa.

James Casebere's *Untitled* (1999) is a Polaroid photograph of hospital beds stacked in a flooded tunnel. Individually, the elements represented in the work are not unusual. As a composition, however, the overall scene is certainly uncommon, yet it does not shock viewers. *Untitled* conforms to the logic of dreams, during which people and things intermingle in odd ways. In this sense, Casebere's photograph approximates the imagery of the unconscious. Evidence that alternate realities exist, even ones as commonly accepted as the unconscious or the archetype, can produce a disconcerting, "uncanny" resonance.

Casebere's work shares with others in "Insites" the effect of evoking, through a bizarrely assembled array of otherwise bland objects, undercurrents of terror. That terror powerfully reveals the instability of the interior spaces in which these objects are normally located. The use of the "uncanny" within artistic representations of the home exposes that domestic realm as a place in which walls, decorations, and potted plants trigger in the minds of their inhabitants the darker currents of modern life.

1. Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny'" (1919), in Freud, *Writings on Art and Literature* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 195.

2. Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The MIT Press, 1992).

3. True crime magazines, which describe actual criminal activity, often include illustrations and covers in the style of pulp fiction periodicals. One current example is *Detective Cases*, published by Globe Communications in Boca Raton, Florida.

4. Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" p. 227.

COLLAPSED INTERIORS

XIAOMING ALBERT

One of the most striking characteristics of art since the 1960s is the collapse of distinctions between inside and outside space. This is nowhere more apparent than in recent video, photographic, sculpture, and installation works that take domestic interiors as their subject.

Peter Campus' single-channel video *Double Vision* is a case in point. For this piece, Campus set two video cameras at opposite corners of an apartment room, and recorded himself walking between the "eyes" of the cameras. The superimposed image of the artist's body in the apartment oscillates as he silently moves back and forth in the interior between the cameras and readjusts the camera angles—as if the camera were a completely passive instrument capturing and further creating a shifting interior in perpetual movement. Campus has described the mechanical operation of *Double Vision* in the following terms: "[*Double Vision* is] an exploration of double- or two-camera images, relating to the evolution of sight in animals. The tape begins with an uncoordinated, two-camera image and works its way up to an eye-brain model, always conscious of how this model differed from its subject matter."¹ The biological "eye-brain" model is one in which the artist acts as the brain and the cameras are the eyes. The final image is achieved symbolically by Campus as he explores the relation-

ship between the basic objective technological element of the video movement and the artist's subjective examinations of dislocated self. Thus the architectural space of the domestic interior is fused with the cognitive space of the psychological interior. In turn, as the work metaphorically connects the two spaces, the distinction between them dissolves.



Gary Hill. *Solstice d'hiver (Winter Solstice)*, 1993

Gary Hill also creates works that are recorded in real time. In *Solstice d'hiver (Winter Solstice)*, for instance, he investigates how an interior can reveal the history of an unseen and unidentified character. The entire sixty-minute videotape was filmed in one continuous shot. The camera first pans in extremely slow motion from the doorway to the

living room, then moves rapidly, following the movement of the character to the kitchen and the private bedroom, ultimately returning to the camera's initial shot. Thus the camera mimics an outsider intruding into someone's private sphere, peeping at the objects, interior spaces, and gestures of everyday life. Hill experiments with the narrative by adding poorly recorded, barely audible fragments of human speech to the living space. The imagery of the interior and the unsynchronized acoustics remain unconnected. However, the combination of interior space and sound fragments together comprise a visual and aural poem, metaphorically fusing an architectural interior with a psychological one.



James Casebere. *Untitled*, 1999

The interior represented in James Casebere's *Untitled* (1999) evokes a film set for a psychodrama on war and history. Casebere constructed a miniature diorama of a sparse enclosed space, which he then photographed. To begin with, in the corridor, three identical beds stand on the wet floor, covered with dust and mold. They are aligned oddly in relation

to the wall. In the far distance, a barred window can be partially seen behind the arch, above the steps. Two other arches on the right side of the wall lead to another unknown dark area, a solitary interior existing outside of what we can see. The set is illuminated from the window, infusing the space with subtle lighting to condense and enrich the pictorial values. The photograph enlarges the miniaturized space, transforming it into a believable interior. Casebere introduced water into the interior to push the viewer's discovery of the content in another direction. The set is flooded and the world inside is not only abandoned but also destroyed. The presence of water, the reflection of the windows, and the light reflected from the water add another layer of texture and another level of illusion—the shapeless shadows created by the water deteriorate the enclosed space. What survives in the interior is an ambiguous and forgotten history, together with a suggestion to escape that history. The result is a haunted place or a dreamscape, an ambiguous world in which what is real and what is not remains unclear. The viewer, in turn, is drawn into the faux space of the setting and then left to intuit the emotions etched by the imagery.

The interiors constructed by Isidro Blasco are also miniaturized, but they have a very personal dimension: they are replications of the artist's own living and working spaces. *Looking in Front of Me #9* consists of a set of photographs of a group of sculptures—miniature reconstructions of Blasco's everyday environment. The interior of each room is open to the



Isidro Blasco. *Looking in Front of Me #9*, 1999–2000

viewer, making a public spectacle of the artist's working and personal life. Blasco assembled the photographs in the form of a three-dimensional structure and attached them to the wall. In this way, according to Blasco, the personal architectural space takes on an even more personal dreamlike quality, even as it is publicly exposed: "I had a dream about a house....I was inside of it....[T]here were rooms and doors and windows and furniture and even other people, but I couldn't tell....Then I woke up and I wrote this list of things to do:

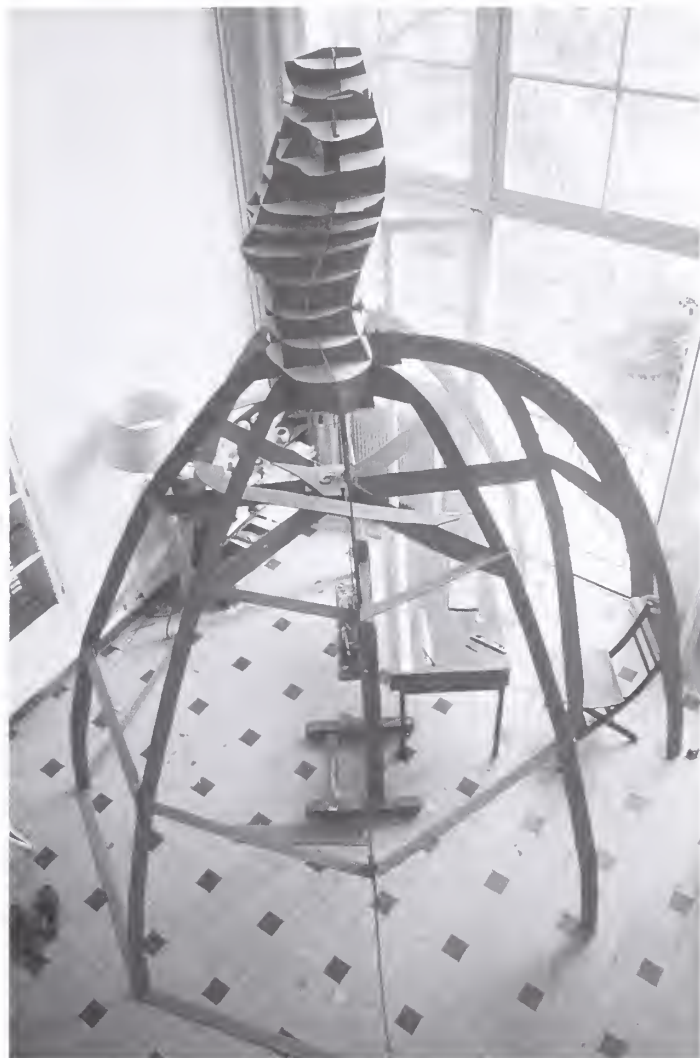
1. Build a house/ build a giant house/ build a model house. 2. Take pictures

from inside. 3. Build another house of the same size with pictures.... 4. You can cut the first house following the lines of the pictures....The result: *House *Photos of the house *Another house."²

Gary Hulton also makes dreamscapes. In *Object of Desire*, he creates an almost empty interior within the body of a large wedding dress. Sewn in the style of French designer

Madeleine Vionnet, the oversized garment is made from plastic bags connected with wires and beer bottle tops. On the outside, the wedding gown is noble, larger than life, elegant and classic in appearance. By contrast, the fragile interior has none of the concrete structures that bolster an ordinary house. As one enters the large, semitransparent garment, the faint light shining through the plastic creates an uneasy, dizzying feeling. The viewer is metaphorically cast as the protagonist of a nuptial narrative, the resident of a tentative space full of promise. Suspended in the center of the dress is a punching bag, complete with boxing gloves featuring Louis Vuitton and Chanel logos. *Object of Desire* not only points to the character of desire—the desire for marriage, stability, domestic bliss—but also criticizes the unspoken tensions that often condition it. As Hulton explained in a brief discussion of the piece: “The wedding dress, in all its brilliant glory, may be symbolic of the greatest of dreams and accomplishments or the biggest empty promise going.”³

Constructing domestic spaces or transforming preexisting ones, Campus, Hill, Casebere, Blasco, and Hulton produce highly provocative works that encourage us to rethink our relation to quotidian sites, even if the sites invoked are in some cases purely metaphorical. Seen together, the work of these artists accentuates the dynamic quality of domestic space and its potential as a site for reading inner psychological experience.



Gary Hulton. Framework for *Object of Desire*, 1998

1. Quoted in Lori Zippay, *Electronic Arts Intermix Video: A Catalogue of the Artists' Videotape Distribution Service of EAI* (New York: Electronic Arts Intermix, 1991), p. 58.

2. Isidro Blasco, *El destino de un tacto/The Fate of a Touch*, exh. cat. (Alicante, Spain: Universidad de Alicante, 1999), pp. 25, 35, 37.

3. Gary Hulton, statement on *Object of Desire*, 1998.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Dimensions are in inches followed by centimeters; height precedes width precedes depth. Sight refers to a measurement taken within the frame or mat opening.

*As of May 12, 2000

Ricci Albenda (b. 1966)

Portal #3, Negative, 1998
Hydrocal, 9 x 10 x 2
(22.9 x 25.4 x 5.1)
Collection of the artist; courtesy
Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York

Portal #3, Positive, 1998
Hydrocal, 9 x 10 x 2
(22.9 x 25.4 x 5.1)
Collection of the artist; courtesy
Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York

Richard Artschwager (b. 1923)

*Door, Mirror, Table, Basket, Rug,
Window D*, 1975
Ink on paper, 25 3/4 x 29
(65.4 x 73.7)
Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York; Purchase, with funds
from the Burroughs Wellcome
Purchase Fund 84.1

Tina Barney (b. 1945)

The Portrait, 1984
Chromogenic color print,
48 x 60 (121.9 x 152.4)
Janet Borden, New York

Uta Barth (b. 1958)

Ground #42, 1994
Chromogenic color print,
11 1/4 x 10 1/2 (28.6 x 26.7)
Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York; Purchase, with funds
from the Photography Committee
95.162

Isidro Blasco (b. 1962)

Looking in Front of Me #9, 1999–2000
Chromogenic color print, foam
board, wood, plaster, and tape,
16 x 18 x 13 (40.6 x 45.7 x 33)
Collection of the artist

Jennifer Bolande (b. 1957)

Small Skyscraper, 1999–2000
Chromogenic color print
(Duratrans), brass, painted steel,
and fluorescent and electric com-
ponents, 33 3/4 x 12 3/4 x 16 1/4
(85.7 x 32.4 x 41.3)
Alexander and Bonin, New York

Peter Campus (b. 1937)

Double Vision, 1971
Video, black-and-white, silent;
15 minutes
Distributed by Electronic Arts
Intermix, New York

James Casebere (b. 1953)

Untitled, 1999
Internal dye diffusion transfer
print (Polaroid), 21 3/8 x 19 3/8
(54.3 x 49.2)
Collection of the artist; courtesy
Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

Greg Drasler (b. 1952)

Aviary, 1994
Oil on canvas, 80 x 70
(203.2 x 177.8)
Collection of the artist

Cadence Giersbach (b. 1966)

Staircase, 1999
Enamel on Mylar, 204 x 96
(518.2 x 243.8)
Collection of the artist; courtesy
Roebing Hall, Brooklyn, New York

Robert Gober (b. 1954)

Untitled, 1985
Graphite on paper, 11 x 14
(27.9 x 35.6)
Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York; Purchase, with funds
from the Drawing Committee and
The Norman and Rosita Winston
Foundation, Inc. 92.43

Dan Graham (b. 1942)

*Hallway Mirror, "Model House"/
Bathroom Mirror, "Model House"*,
1967 and 1969
Two chromogenic color prints,
26 x 33 (66 x 83.8) overall
Collection of the artist; courtesy
Marian Goodman Gallery,
New York

Jane Hammond (b. 1950)

Full House, 1992–93
Engraving with screenprint,
collaged offset lithography, and
graphite, 78 1/2 x 51
(199.4 x 129.5) sight
Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York; Purchase, with funds
from the Print Committee 93.89

Gary Hill (b. 1951)

Solstice d'hiver (Winter Solstice), 1993
Video, color, sound; 60 minutes
Distributed by Electronic Arts
Intermix, New York

Gary Hulton (b. 1956)

Object of Desire, 1998
Bicycle spokes, beer bottle caps,
Korean coins, polyethylene bags,
chains, and color photocopies, 138
x 128 x 128 (350.5 x 325.1 x 325.1)
Collection of the artist

Michael Hurson (b. 1941)

Thurman Buzzard's Apartment,
1973–74
Balsa wood and plexiglass,
16 1/2 x 73 1/4 x 31 7/8
(41.9 x 186.1 x 81)
Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York; Purchase, with funds
from the John I.H. Baur Purchase
Fund 77.70

Louise Lawler (b. 1947)

Untitled (Good Morning), 1990–95
Silver dye bleach print
(Cibachrome), crystal, and felt,
2 x 3 1/2 (5.9 x 8.9)
Metro Pictures, New York, and the
artist

Untitled (Barney), 1995
Silver dye bleach print
(Cibachrome), crystal, and felt,
2 x 3 1/2 (5.9 x 8.9)
Metro Pictures, New York, and the
artist

**Gordon Matta-Clark
(1945–1978)**

Conical Intersect, 1975
Silver dye bleach print
(Cibachrome), 39 13/16 x 29 15/16
(101.1 x 76)
Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York; Purchase, with funds
from the Photography Committee
92.71

Ryan McGinness (b. 1972)

Interior View, 1999
Iris print on canvas with plastic
vinyl, 8 x 24 (20.3 x 61)
Collection of the artist

Interior View, 1999
Iris print on canvas with plastic
vinyl, 8 x 24 (20.3 x 61)
Collection of the artist

Abelardo Morell (b. 1948)

*Camera Obscura Image of Houses Across
the Street in Our Living Room*, 1991
Gelatin silver print, 20 x 24
(50.8 x 61)
Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York; Purchase, with funds
from Anne and Joel S. Ehrenkranz
00.19

Catherine Murphy (b. 1946)

Moiré Chair, 1991
Oil on canvas, 40 x 46
(101.6 x 116.8)
Collection of the artist; courtesy
Lennon, Weinberg, New York

Leemour Pelli (b. 1964)

Untitled, 1998
Graphite and oil on paper,
30 x 22 (76.2 x 55.9)
Collection of the artist

Martha Rosler (b. 1943)

Red Stripe Kitchen, from the series
*Bringing the War Home: House
Beautiful*, 1969–72
Color photograph of photomontage,
25 1/2 x 23 1/4 (64.8 x 59)
Collection of Susan and Michael
Hort

Peter Scott (b. 1960)

Untitled, 1998
Mirror, gouache on board, and
lamp, 60 x 24 x 7 (153.6 x 61 x 17.8)
Collection of the artist

Laurie Simmons (b. 1960)

First Bathroom/Woman Kneeling, 1978
Silver dye bleach print
(Cibachrome), 3 1/8 x 4 3/4
(7.9 x 12.1)
Metro Pictures, New York, and the
artist

First Bathroom/Woman Standing Left,
1978
Silver dye bleach print
(Cibachrome), 3 x 5 (7.6 x 12.7)
Metro Pictures, New York, and the
artist

New Kitchen/Aerial View, 1978
Silver dye bleach print
(Cibachrome), 3 x 5 (7.6 x 12.7)
Metro Pictures, New York, and the
artist

Purple Woman/Kitchen/2nd View, 1978
Silver dye bleach print
(Cibachrome), 3 1/8 x 4 3/4
(7.9 x 12.1)
Metro Pictures, New York, and the
artist

Lorna Simpson (b. 1960)

Interior/Exterior, Full/Empty, No. 2,
1997
Gelatin silver print, silkscreened
text, and frame,
22 1/2 x 18 1/2 (57.1 x 47)
Collection of the artist; courtesy
Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

Interior/Exterior, Full/Empty, No. 3, 1997
Gelatin silver print, silkscreened
text, and frame,
22 1/2 x 18 1/2 (57.1 x 47)
Collection of the artist; courtesy
Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

Interior/Exterior, Full/Empty, No. 6, 1997
Gelatin silver print, silkscreened
text, and frame,
22 1/2 x 18 1/2 (57.1 x 47)
Collection of the artist; courtesy
Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

Interior/Exterior, Full/Empty, No. 7, 1997
Gelatin silver print, silkscreened
text, and frame,
22 1/2 x 18 1/2 (57.1 x 47)
Collection of the artist; courtesy
Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

**Steina and Woody Vasulka
(b. 1940; b. 1937)**

Home, 1973
Video, color, sound; 17 minutes
Distributed by Electronic Arts
Intermix, New York

**Francesca Woodman
(1958–1981)**

*Then at one point I did not need to
translate the notes; they went directly to
my hands*, Providence, 1976
Gelatin silver print, 6 x 6
(15.2 x 15.2)
Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York; Purchase, with funds
from the Photography Committee
94.85

Jessica Wynne (b. 1972)

Untitled, 1994
Chromogenic color print,
20 x 22 (50.8 x 55.9)
Collection of the artist

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"Insites: Interior Spaces in Contemporary Art" would not have been possible without the significant support of many colleagues and friends. We would like to thank the Helena Rubinstein Foundation, Joanne Leonhardt Cassullo, the New Dorothea L. Leonhardt Fund of the Communities Foundation of Texas, Easton Foundation, the National Committee of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and The Dorothea L. Leonhardt Foundation, Inc. for supporting the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program, which has offered us such an extraordinary opportunity. Our gratitude extends in particular to Eva Diaz, exhibition coordinator, for carefully guiding us through the many challenges of the last ten months. We are grateful as well to Alex Alberro and Ron Clark for their thoughtful contributions to the intellectual development of this exhibition. We would also like to acknowledge the enthusiasm of Lynne Dorfman, Lynne Gray, and Cynthia Roznoy at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Champion. Whitney Museum director Maxwell L. Anderson, associate director for curatorial affairs Eugenie Tsai, and curators Chrissie Iles, David Kiehl, and Sylvia Wolf provided helpful ideas and inspiration, as did assistant curator Shamim Momin. Other staff members, including Joel Bacon, Heather Cox, Tiffany Davidson, Nathalie Dubuc, Anita Duquette, Gareth James, Suzanne Quigley, Barbi Spieler, and the staffs of the Library and the Publications & New Media Department were tirelessly patient and resourceful. Our comrades in the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program were also invaluable in the construction of "Insites." Discussions with Gregg Bordowitz, Benjamin Buchloh, Jennifer González, Yvonne Rainer, and Martha Rosler shaped our ideas about exhibitions and interior space. The development of "Insites" is also due in large part to the generous assistance of many individuals outside the Museum. Sincerest thanks are extended to Acoustiguide Worldwide, David Albert, Anne Beffel, Mijoung Chang, Jane DeBevoise, Wenda Gu, Galen Joseph-Hunter, Andrew Miller, Momenta, Jim Murray, Muffy Perl binder, John Pultz, Roebbling Hall, Andréa Salerno, Richard Stewart, Kate Travers, Beth Venn, and Karl Willers. Of crucial importance are the gallerists and collectors who lent works to the show. And of course, it is to the artists featured in "Insites" that we owe the greatest appreciation.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART AT CHAMPION

One Champion Plaza
Atlantic Street at Tresser Boulevard
Stamford, Connecticut 06921
(203) 358-7630

GALLERY HOURS

Tuesday–Saturday 11 am–5 pm
Free admission

GALLERY TALKS

Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, 12:30 pm
Tours by appointment

STAFF

Shamim Momin
Assistant Curator, and Manager, Branch Programs

Cynthia Roznoy
Branch Curator

Lynne Dorfman
Education Coordinator

Lynne Gray
Public Programs Coordinator

Susan Collier
Gallery Assistant

Deborah Edwards
Gallery Assistant

PRINTING

Meridian Printing

PAPER

Champion Kromekote® and Pageantry®

Photograph Credits: Geoffrey Clements, pp. 10, 16

